6: Smith I,Y-5 (no date) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

12
178
855
764
845
553

Babies are passed over the coffin of ancestors during burial rites.

Children born feet first are gifted and able to manipulate binding constraints.

Children may be named according to season of birth, birth order, and of birth date.[18]

121
603
855

In a more recent research effort Kiser suggests that grandparents assume a major responsibility in the Sea Island family.[19] This investigation suggests that the role of grandparents was primarily due to: (a) the migration of younger parents to urban cities while leaving behind offsprings to the care and rearing traditions of grandparents, (b) the seasonal employment patterns whereby the parent temporarily leaves the Island in search of jobs on the mainland.

121
178
855

Undoubtedly these factors do act as antecedents, however, the extent to which this behavior is affected by cultural tradition has not been entertained. Hence it is uncertain whether the status accorded elder Sea Islanders and their family roles are primarily related to environmental factors or more so to the survival of West African cultural elements. There is reason to suggest that the functioning of elders in the Sea Island family and

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[18] Herskovits and F. S. Dahomey, Life in the Haitian Valley (2 vols.; New York: 1937-1938).

[19] Vernon Kiser, Sea Island to Urban Centers (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1932).

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

RICE SONGS

243
46
•553

Growing rice was a thriving industry along the Ogeechee, Altamaha, and Satilla rivers a century ago, but today it is difficult to find even a handful of grain to demonstrate how it was beaten. At Hofwyl Plantation, the last in Glynn County to grow rice to any extent, I asked Jerry Rutledge about the songs that were used for planting rice, and getting it ready to eat. He gave me these appropriate lines:

[539]

John say you got to reap in the harvest what you sow
John-say you got to reap in the harvest what you sow
If you sow it in the rain, you got to reap it jus' the same
You got to reap in the harvest what you sow.

He explained how the rice sheaves, about a foot through, and tied with a twist of straw, were whipped with "frails"; they were laid in parallel rows on a large sheet on the floor with the butt ends out. When two Negroes "t'rashed" together, they always sang as they faced each other. The short part of the flail which flew in the air in a seemingly reckless fashion was called a "bob," and it was rather important to have its gyrations rhythmically controlled. As soon as one side of a sheaf was clear of rice it was turned over and the other side whipped. By the time the string was broken the grain was in a long row in the middle.

Julia Walker, born near Riceboro in Liberty County, gave me precisely the same description of the work, and sang the following song as she demonstrated how the "frail" was used. Frankly, I was skeptical of the strength of the rawhide that attached the bob to the stick, and kept well out of range:

[539]

Turn sinner turn—sinner wouldn't turn
Turn sinner turn—sinner wouldn't turn
My Lord call you—wouldn't come
I know sinner too late, too late
O too late I know, sinner, too late.
Church bell ring—you wouldn't come
Preacher preach—an' you wouldn't come
My Lord call you—an' you wouldn't come
I know sinner too late, too late
O too late, sinner, too late.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

her husband's pails which they took to the field with them for dinner.[26]

If the wife were frugal, she might have a portion of the weekly rations left when Monday came around again, and these she might either feed to her pigs and chickens or sell to the overseer or to an island storekeeper. The money was hers to use for the good of the family, but it was hers, nevertheless. It was the woman of the family who, with the aid of her children, worked most of the family patch, and it was usually the woman who marketed the produce and pocketed the money received in exchange.

The planters helped to make of woman the dominant sex in the family life of the slave by the position which they gave her in the plantation regime. The cabin was hers. The children, too, were listed on the plantation records as belonging to the mother. Seldom was the father's name indicated. Thus a person might go through life known as Binah's Toby or Moll's July. Likewise the mother had the privilege of naming the new baby unless she graciously yielded the right to its father or to a friend or relative. In this right she often exercised a singular taste, for one child might be called Jupiter, another Quash, a third January, and a fourth Hard Times.

Miss Towne was amused at the jealousy of their "natural rights" which the men on St. Helena Island began to show after that region had come under the jurisdiction of the Federal Army during the Civil War. "Political freedom they are rather shy of, and ignorant of," she

[26] Some planters, as it has already been pointed out, delegated plantation cooks to prepare the noon meal for the field hands so that they might have something hot to eat at this time. Some planters also allowed an hour's rest at nine o'clock for breakfast.